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AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE PASS TO AMEMBASSY MALABO

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SUBJECT: NIGERIAN NUGGETS -- JANUARY 29, 2010

REF: ABUJA 0105; ABUJA 0079

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Abuja, Political Section; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (U) Mission Nigeria provides the following compilation of recent political, economic, and social developments not reported previously.

SUCCESSFUL RE-RUN ELECTION IN EDO STATE

¶2. (SBU) The Independent National Election Commission (INEC) conducted a House of Assembly "re-run" election in the Etsako Central Constituency of Edo State January 23, after which INEC declared January 24 that the Action Congress (AC) candidate Johnson Egwakhide was the winner. To date, none of the four participating opposition parties has denounced the election or threatened to challenge its outcome. David Ugolor, the head of a civil society coalition that monitored the election, observed to Lagos Political Specialist that the January 23 re-run election occurred peacefully and in strict compliance with the electoral law. Shortly after the election results were published, Edo State Governor Adams Oshiomhole (AC) and ranking People's Democratic Party (PDP) leader Michael Akhibge told journalists that the election re-run was free and fair.

POLITICAL ASSASSINATION SUSPECTED IN OGUN STATE

¶3. (C) Ogun Police Commissioner Musa Daura told journalists January 27 that, according to preliminary investigations, the January 26 murder of Action Congress (AC) gubernatorial candidate Dipo Dina shared "some elements of robbery and assassination." Many Nigerians, however, view Dina's death as politically-motivated. For several months, a tense atmosphere has prevailed in Ogun State because of disputes between Governor Gbenga Daniel and several groups or individuals. A contact claimed to Lagos Political Specialist January 28 that Governor Daniel probably had a hand in

Dina's death. Both men have been embroiled in political and legal disputes over the April 2007 election. This contact also listed several prominent opposition politicians who live outside the state for fear of possible attacks from Governor Daniel, including former Governor Segun Osoba (AC); prominent Ogun Chief Alaba Lawson, also involved in a dispute with the Governor; and Senator Ibikunle Amosun, the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) gubernatorial candidate whose petition against Governor Daniel's election remained before the courts.

SHARIA COUNCIL SAYS WOMEN LEADERS PROHIBITED

14. (SBU) Highly-placed politicians in Kwara State have called for the election of a female governor in the 2011 elections. According to the media, State Coordinator Alhaji Tijani Edun, representing the Kwara State branch of the Supreme Council for Sharia, immediately replied that such a move ran counter to "the principle of Islamic law that forbids female leadership in Islam." Edun added that "any attempt by a female politician to rule the state would spell doom where more than 80 percent of the population is Muslim." He called for fervent prayers to salvage the state from

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such a fate, calling on Muslims to converge at the Yidi praying ground in Illorin May 30, to pray.

ALLEGED HARASSMENT OF THE MEDIA IN KANO STATE

15. (SBU) General Manager Farouk Dalhatu of Kano's "Freedom Radio" described to Public Affairs and Information Officers actions that the government of Kano Governor Ibrahim Shekarau (ANPP) has taken allegedly to obstruct or close down the FM station before the 2011 elections. Dalhatu believes these official actions, including a public announcement to suspend all Kano government advertising on the station, reflect a calculated decision by the Governor's party, the ANPP, to control information leading up to the 2011 elections, sure to be contested by the national ruling PDP. Other alleged harassment includes the sending of letters maligning the station to the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and the police; linking the station to the murder of a prominent Muslim cleric; the arrest and detention of the station manager over the content of a news broadcast; and an attack by members of the Governor's personal staff on the family of a journalist who consulted with the station.

16. (C) Governor Shekarau denied the harassment allegations during a January 21 meeting with the Ambassador, but he acknowledged that he had communicated "concerns" over recent "immoral content that bothered him" and he denied that his Government had tried to close down the station. (See ref A for more details.) (N.B.: "Freedom Radio" has broadcast U.S. Government interviews, translated into Hausa, most recently by Secretary Clinton in August and Special Representative to Muslim Communities Farah Pandith in September. END NOTE.)

¶7. (U) The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) supports the provision of comprehensive care and treatment at selected hospitals to address HIV-AIDS in six northern Nigeria states: Taraba, Adamawa, Kebbi, Kogi, Kwara, and Niger. As a result, Taraba State has reduced the incidence of HIV-AIDS from 6.1 to 5.2 percent among its population.

NIGERIA NAVY CAPTAIN PARTICIPATES IN HAITI RELIEF

¶8. (U) The Lagos Public Diplomacy Section hosted seven print media and two television networks for a telephone interview January 26 with Nigerian Navy Captain A. A. Osinowo, currently serving as the Deputy Commodore of the Africa Partnership Station (APS) aboard the USS Gunston Hall. The U.S. Navy diverted the USS Gunston Hall from West Africa to Haiti after the recent earthquake to help with relief efforts. The interview with Captain Osinowo provided an opportunity to highlight both U.S. relief efforts in Haiti and the APS's humanitarian focus. To date, coverage have appeared on Channels TV and in two local papers, with more expected during the weekend.

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GLO UNDERSEA CABLE SUNK

¶9. (C) The undersea cable project for mobile telecom provider "Glo" is in jeopardy. "Glo" had been partnering with Alcatel to lay the cable from the United Kingdom to Portugal and to the West coast of Africa to Nigeria as well as Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal, and Ghana. Recently, "Glo" has failed to make agreed-upon payments to Alcatel, per ARM Capital Partners Managing Director Ted Manvitz January 22. He described the project as "dead in the water" due to lack of payments. "MainOne" cable, planned to run from Portugal to Nigeria, however, remains on schedule. "MainOne" has provided evidence to ConGen Lagos Econoff of its payments from partner Tyco. The cable for "MainOne" will arrive in Lagos around May 2010.

INEFFICIENT ELECTRICITY MANAGEMENT

¶10. (C) Managing Director James Doak and Chief Financial Officer Robert Kremer of the U.S. power generation giant AES met with Econoff January 26 to discuss electricity generation in Nigeria. Doak said Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN), the power authority in Nigeria, has dispersed power evenly over the national grid, rather than creating "islands of stability" and expanding the grid from those islands. Such actions have made the grid worse, according to AES experts, by trying to disperse power evenly throughout a weak grid system. If PHCN were to concentrate on "islands" where the grid has strength, they could develop a system

of mini-grids. They said PHCN could develop such mini-grids eventually into an effective national grid. Doak assumed that the PHCN has decided on their dispersed method of distribution because of pressure to provide power to as many people as possible. AES generators have suffered from the PHCN decision because they have become susceptible to broad fluctuations that wear down generators faster than normal. If such activity continued, Doak and Kremer warned, AES will leave Nigeria at the end of their current contract in 2014 or they will simply run the generators into the ground after 2014 (by when the generators will be paid off). If AES officials left Nigeria, they said they would attempt to move their power barges to Cameroon, if feasible.

HOUSE DELEGATION TO SAUDI GOING NOWHERE

¶11. (C) House of Representatives Minority Leader Mohammed Ali Ndume, a member of a six-person delegation that planned to travel to Saudi Arabia to verify President Yar'Adua's medical condition, confirmed to PolOff January 27 that no one from the delegation has even applied for visas. Ndume said no one has asked for his passport, noting that House Speaker Demeji Bankole of the ruling PDP, would have the final say on such travel. Such a trip would in any event likely be futile, as First Lady Turai Yar'Adua has severely restricted direct access to the ailing President. Based on our contacts with Ndume and others, it appears the public proposal to send a fact-finding team to Jeddah was basically grandstanding.

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¶12. (U) Embassy Abuja and ConGen Lagos collaborated on this telegram.
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